

Sweet Mine
Gordon Creek
Carbon County
Utah

HAER No. UT-56

HAER
UTAH,
4-GOCR,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Sweet Mine

HAER No. UT-56

Location: SW 1/4, Section 17, Township 13 South, Range 8 East
Gordon Creek, Carbon County, Utah

Quad: Jump Creek, Utah (U.S.G.S. 7.5')

Dates of Construction: Primary construction of the mine began in 1922-23.
The main mine was constructed in 1924. It closed in
1937, but was briefly reopened during World War II.

Present Owners: E. E. Pierce and G. P. Frandsen

Present Use: Not in use

Significance: The mine is significant as the first mine in Utah where
the majority of the original miners were Japanese.

Historian: John a. Senulis
Senco-Phenix
Salt Lake City, Utah

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Coal has always been an important commodity in Utah. Brigham Young extolled the value of coal over wood and wrote to the New York Herald in the 1870s, soliciting capital for its removal and use in manufacturing. In 1854, the Territorial Legislature offered a reward of \$1,000 for anyone locating abundant sources of coal that could be shipped to Salt Lake City [Utah Mining Association: 1955]. Coal was first discovered in Coalville in 1849. James Gunnison, on an exploratory mapping mission for the United States Corps of Topographical Engineers, discovered coal in Castle Valley [Doelling and Smith: 1982].

Even though coal was readily available, it was very difficult to transport to populated Salt Lake City. Packing by mule or by wagon, when roads were available, was a costly and time-consuming effort. The Fairview Coke and Coal Company opened a seam in Huntington Canyon in 1874, but poor transportation facilities caused the company's failure in 1878 (Doelling and Smith: 1982).

The true development of the coal industry in Utah coincides with the development of the railroad industry. In 1870, the Union Pacific Railroad, in need of coal for operation, opened mines in Green River and Rock Springs, Wyoming, and in 1874 in Coalville, Utah. The Union Pacific Railroad, which generally followed the route of modern-day Interstates 80 and 84 into Ogden, Utah, had easy access from its mines to the urban market of Salt Lake Valley. Without a competing railroad from other coal sources, this created an immediate monopoly on the coal supply for Salt Lake city that persisted for a decade [Union Pacific Coal Company: 1940].

General William Palmer, head of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, had been stifled in his attempt to extend his railroad into Santa Fe and the southwest. In 1880, he turned his attention westward toward Utah, particularly with thoughts of market opportunities for his Colorado Coal and Iron Company [Athearn: 1962]. Also, in 1880, the Pleasant Valley Coal Company and the Pleasant Valley Railway had begun to break the monopoly of the Union Pacific. Obviously witnessing this success, Palmer influenced Salt Lake businessman Dr. William Bell to form the Sevier Valley Railway in 1880, with the expressed intent of building a line from Ogden, south to the Arizona border [Athearn: 1962].

In 1881, the Sevier Valley Railway, as well as the Salt Lake and Park City Railway, were merged into the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway. By 1882, the "Western," as it was popularly known, had acquired most of the narrow gauge mining railways in the State of Utah, including the Pleasant Valley Railway [Athearn: 1962]. The former Sevier Valley Railway had begun an eastern branch, originally scheduled to run through Castle Valley and Salina Canyon. The Western company revised the route of the railway when the Central Utah Railroad, a division of the Union Pacific, showed renewed interest in Carbon

County in 1882 [Athearn: 1962]. The mainline of the Denver and Rio Grande Western was a narrow gauge railway that fit the needs of the existing narrow gauge mining railroads. The Denver and Rio Grande Western joined the Denver and Rio Grande on May 30, 1883, just outside Green River, Utah [Athearn: 1962].

While the Union Pacific was concentrating on developing its Wyoming coal resources, the Denver and Rio Grande western, in 1887, formed a subsidiary coal company, Utah Fuel Company. Utah Fuels acquired the Sunnyside and Castle Gate mines which, together with the previously-acquired Pleasant Valley Coal Company, formed a monopoly once held by Union Pacific. In 1900, Utah Fuels was the leading producer of coal in Utah, and Carbon County was clearly the center of production [Alexander: 1963].

The early twentieth century saw three major trends in mining in Carbon County. The first was the continuous immigration from Europe and the Far East into the county. The second trend was an increasing demand for coal and coke, both in Utah and in other parts of the West. Together, the two trends combined to increase the population of Carbon County in a growing, yet unstable, economy [Powell: 1981].

The third trend was the rise of the independent coal companies. This trend actually began in 1904 when Utah Fuel Company was taken to court for fraudently acquiring public local land. As Denver and Rio Grande Western had entered Utah with "dummy corporations," so did Utah Fuel Company expand their operations in Carbon County. The trial took five years, and the Utah Fuel Company lost and was heavily fined [Powell: 1985]. With this loss, and the threat of a formation of a public utilities commission, Utah Fuels became more compliant with competition to the point of attempting to join other Carbon County coal companies in fixing prices [Powell: 1985].

With the end of the railroad monopoly, new sources of capital were attracted to Carbon County. Spring Canyon, which had been previously prospected, saw new mines developed in 1912 at Standardville by F. A. Sweet and at Storr's by William J. (Uncle Jesse) Knight [Alexander: 1963]. Jesse Knight needed coal and coke for his silver mines at Tintic and, in the typical Knight fashion, he purchased 1,600 acres with mineral rights to the canyon and had 60 sandstone houses built. Knight named the town after his associate, George A. Storrs, who managed the mine. Together with the elaborate facilities built by Sweet at Standardville, Knight's mine, commonly called the Spring Canyon Mine, helped make Spring Canyon the center of mining in Carbon County by 1913. The two mines flourished, producing up to 1,000 tons per day. By the end of World War II, Spring Canyon had produced eleven million tons of coal [Zehnder: 1984].

George A. Storrs, while not as wealthy as Uncle Jesse or the Sweet brothers, was also a man with a vision. He left Spring Canyon in 1921 and established a cooperative city named Great Western in the Gordon Creek area. Storrs' rather

ambitious goal was to sell farming shares to miners who would receive the interest in the town. The idea had some immediate success -- 200 lots were sold and a road was being built from Spring Canyon to Great Western. Expectations for Great Western were raised in 1923 when heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey established facilities in the town. However, the hopes of the town were dashed in 1924 when Dempsey decided not to invest in the coal company and left the area. The town of Great Western, which had changed its name to Dempseyville in 1923, changed its name to Coal City upon Dempsey's departure [Zehnder: 1984].

The town of Coal City had been laid out in the valley floor with the idea of the miner-farmer necessary for its success. There was, from the start, competition from the more traditional mining approach of A. E. Gibson. Gibson, who had succeeded Storrs as superintendent at Spring Canyon, began prospecting for coal in 1921 further west up Gordon Creek Canyon. He located a 9-foot vein and, in 1922, the Consumers Mutual Coal Company was formed with Donald Jenkins as president and Gibson as vice president [Zehnder: 1984].

At the same time that Consumers was being formed, F. A. Sweet was developing another prospect between Coal City and Consumers. Sweet founded the National Coal Company and helped establish the National Railroad into Gordon Creek by 1925. The coal mine was named the National Mine.

A third mine within one mile of National and Consumers was also begun about 1921. It was originally owned by the Gordon Creek Coal Company, but was purchased by C. N. Sweet and H. W. Sweet in 1925 and renamed the Sweet Mine. The railroad was the key to the development of the Gordon Creek area. In the 1924 "Report of the Mine Inspection Department," none of the fledgling Gordon Creek coal companies were mentioned.

The years 1924 through 1931 were peak times for the Gordon Creek coal companies. National and Consumers grew as towns. National was noted for its red tile homes, while Consumers had a four-story office building and was the site of the doctor's office, which served all three communities [Dorman: 1981].

Sweet remained a tent city, largely because almost all of the miners were first generation Japanese-Americans [Taniguchi: 1986]. The Japanese were the most compliant of the immigrant groups. The "bushido" code of internal control and family orientation allowed them to accept less than desirable conditions [Papanikolas and Kasai: 1976]. Many also believed that they would someday return to their homeland [Notarianni: 1979]. Sometime in the early 1930s, the population composition at Sweet began to change and, with new arrivals, more substantial housing was constructed. By 1937, Sweet had the appearance of most of the other liner mining towns of Gordon Creek [Dorman: 1981].

The Gordon Creek mines in general and the Sweet Mine in particular were faced with certain geological problems. The quality of the coal was moderately good [Doelling: 1972], but there were at least thirty-three major faults [Spieker: 1931]. The faults caused a number of false starts on seemingly promising seams. Today, evidence exists for at least eighteen portals at the Sweet Mine, with more at nearby Consumers.

The dominant feature of the canyon today is the remains of a large wooden trestle. The trestle was once part of an elaborate trestle-hopper-tipple complex. The major portion of the structure has been removed since [Taniguchi: 1986], possibly for reuse in a mine in Montana. Exactly how the trestle was used is unknown. The track areas are only wide enough for electric mine cars. The trestle appears to dead end into the hillside and, except for a narrow perpendicular tramway, there is no other evidence to indicate how the trestle was used. It can be hypothesized that the tram cars were fed by conveyors at the base of the hill. They would then be taken to the tipple, dumped, and returned on the second track. This could be why one tract is four feet lower than the other. Today, the tipple is deteriorating rapidly, particularly along the shallow concrete footings.

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DESCRIPTION OF FEATURE AT THE SWEET MINE SITE
GORDON CREEK, UTAH

General Information

I. Sources:

The material used in the feature descriptions was taken from the following data sources:

1. Notes and dimensions taken by Allen D. Roberts during on-site investigations conducted on August 11, 1986.
2. Photographs taken by John A. Senulis during on-site investigation conducted on August 11, 1986.
3. Site descriptions prepared by Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil, Gas and Mining.
4. Sheets of measured architectural features prepared by Allen D. Roberts during the month of August 1986.

II. Format:

The feature has been described using a four-step process as follows:

- A. Probable use (or name)
- B. Construction materials
- C. Dimensions
- D. Additional information.

Feature Description

I. Feature:

- A. Sweet mine trestle.
- B. Timber framed with metal bolts, concrete support pads.
- C. The trestle is 169 feet long by 30 feet wide by 54 feet high.
- D. Trestle was part of a tipple-hopper trestle complex.
Tipple-hopper complex was removed five years previously.